

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Salinas Families

Today the history story will concern families living in the Salinas Valley area, in answer to a list of questions Norman S. Atkins of Sana Barbara has asked me to answer for him. He is in the process of doing some research on his family and wants information to assist putting relationship together.

He is the great-grandson of Pleasant and Sarah Thompson who came to California from Sherman County, Texas, in 1853 by wagon train. The Thompson family first went to Los Angeles where they spent the winter and then settled in the Salinas area in the spring of 1854.

The original Thompson home still stands a few feet off the Salinas-Monterey Highway, about one half mile south of the new shopping area in Salinas. A family story has it that Pleasant Thompson lost this ranch in the late 1860's to Mr. Spreckels in a horse race.

About 1870 the Thompsons settled in King City area where they went into farming, the grain and feed business. They operated two hotels or stage stops. The first one was between Greenfield and King City but was demolished when Highway 101 was improved in the '20s or '30s.

They also operated a second place which still stands just south of the bridge at Soledad on the road leading to the Arroyo Seco. It is my understanding that Vasquez, the bandit, was a frequent visitor to their hotel in King City.

He apparently took a shine to Sarah Thompson. The other reason being that one of his hideouts was in the Thompson ranch in the area of Thompson Canyon called "the rocks"

"Do you know where there was a place called "Confederate Corners?" Yes, to this day many the old timers still call Hitchcock Road by the name of Confederate Corners, because so many southern folks settled there. Then Mr. Atkins goes on to list names and what he wishes to know about them.

At Confederate Corners there lived the Hunters, Garsides, Bouragrades, Hitchcocks, the Louis Fentons, (Margaret J. Fenton). Their children were all born at Confederate Corners. Settlers also were Bitchers,

Drentwell, and Stirings. A family by the name of John Sexton, Joe Thompson, and Wright Alsop, all lived on Romie Lane.

The house where the Fenton children were born and raised, was torn down just, a couple of years ago. The blacksmith shop still stands. It was run by a father and son, Edward and Lewis Fenton.

A Mrs. Early Pierson, J. Thompson's daughter, lives on Romie Lane on the outskirts of Salinas. At one time that street was a land but now is a very heavily traveled street.

Two Soberanes brothers were soldiers (Spanish) who came here at the same time as De Anza (Portola) 1790-1792. They were of the sovereign ruling class. They came from Spain by the way of Mexico and then on to California. Boronda came at the same time. Octavaio Boronda, lived on McFadden road before moving to Salinas.

He was a farmer and his son, Francis S. Boronda was a nationally known artist. Sylvania Boronda was a farmer. Octavaio Boronda had three daughters, Josie, Jennie, Julia. He married a cousin (Soberanes). They were all farmers in the Graves District.

John Steinbeck's mother was a Hamilton from the southern part of Monterey County, a fact which he mentions in his book "Travels with Charlie".

Richardson and Soberanes, cousins, married and had the first redheaded boy born in Monterey. It is said that cousins married in those days because they did not want to have anything to do with the "gringos". Mrs. O. Boronda was a Soberanes and a sister of Mrs. Bianchi and also of Benito Soberanes, who was a prominent figure in Salinas, a broker and real estate businessman; Mrs. Bianchi of Gonzales, lived on the old River road.

There were eight or nine children born of this union. Francisco Boronda owned land from Gonzales to Soledad on the west side of the mountains.

Mr. Daniel McDougall, a Civil War veteran, married Lydia Hamilton. He was appointed Custom Inspector in 1866. Their first child, Margaret J., who later married Lewis Fenton and went to live at Confederate Corners. Her daughter is Mrs. George Von Sooston of Salinas. Mr. McDougall's appointment came as a reward or recognition for service in the Union Army. He was the last to serve as Custom Inspector before customs were moved to San Francisco.

Mrs. Van Sooston and Mrs. Annie Black of Salinas furnished most of the information for the answers to Mr. Atkin's questions.